

Theseus: Champion of Elysium, Underworld's Best Babysitter **by Luddleston**

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Summary:

Theseus finds a strange creature wandering the fields of Elysium.

The creature, he realizes, is a child.

Obviously, Theseus must take on the NOBLE QUEST to help this young lady find her father. Whoever that is. Hey, whose kid is this anyway?

Theseus: Champion of Elysium, Underworld's Best Babysitter

Author's Note:

Listen I do want to write cute dad than/zag but apparently I'm first writing Theseus being FOOLED by a CHILD!!!

Theseus can't estimate children's ages, but she's about 3 or 4.

Though the Underworld was a twisting warren of ever-changing chambers, nearly impossible to navigate and even more difficult to escape, Theseus fancied himself an expert at finding his way through them. Even as such, it took an extensive amount of time to make one's way across the Underworld, and Theseus often came across strange and new curiosities as he wandered.

This, perhaps, was the strangest of all.

Theseus generally stayed away from objects knee-high or lower, as they had the tendency to be those little meowing chariots which would explode when prodded. He'd found that out in a rather unpleasant way. The little figure in the glade he stumbled upon was no chariot, but was just as small as one, and it took Theseus a deplorable amount of time to realize it was a child.

In his defense, he hadn't seen a child that young since his mortal days, as they tended not to reside in Elysium. He approached cautiously. It was entirely plausible this being was something *else* in the guise of a child, after all.

"Hello there!" he called, from some distance. "Little one? What brings you out here?"

Upon noticing him, the child stood from where they had been crouched beside the Lethe and trotted over, a long, pale yellow dress trailing behind. It was a little girl, Theseus realized when she drew closer, with her dark hair braided as if by a neat and careful hand, a laurel like Theseus' own but in a bright gold peeking out from between the plaits. In her arms, she held a soft

toy, which he could not identify as a replication of any living creature, if only for how tight she squeezed it and how her arms hid any features.

She looked at him curiously for a moment, strangely golden eyes bright as she watched him. "Hello," she said, with a clear, disarming voice. She appeared quite young, still moving with the toddling gait of a child who had learned to walk only perhaps a year or two ago.

"Are you all right? It is quite dangerous for somebody of your size to be wandering about here," Theseus said, carefully lowering his normally-booming voice so as not to frighten the little thing.

She did not appear in the least bit frightened, so he must have been successful. "I'm looking for my daddy. I have to go across that." She pointed at the stretch of river she had been looking at, which would be easily dashed across by any shade or warrior but was far too wide for her to pass.

"Your father? What is his name, perhaps I know him!" Theseus prided himself on being well-acquainted with his subjects—er, with his *fellow shades*.

She shrugged and tucked her face against the toy in her arms.

Ah, perhaps one so young would not know their parent's proper name. Well. He could at least get her to the marketplace outside the arena, where somebody might recognize her as a friend's child. It was a noble quest, Theseus decided, to help one such as this in need!

"Come along, then, I will help you across," he said, leading her to the stepping stones that passed over this part of the river. "Do you require assistance, little one?"

She shook her head and hopped from the riverbank to the first stone, and then from the first to the second with ease. The third was a bit farther away, and she had to hold her toy with one arm, stretching the other out for balance. Despite her insistence, Theseus worried she would not be able to

cross alone, and he crouched just at the edge of the bank, waiting to dash across and scoop her up along the way if need be.

She stopped on the third stone, looked at the far bank, and then back at him.

"I can't go that far," she said, indicating the distance to the far bank.

"Not to worry!" Theseus stepped into action, dashing across the river in one leap and then extending a hand to the little girl to help her across. She barely weighed a thing, which made Theseus certain she was another shade, and so...

Why would she not be in Asphodel? It was a mystery he was determined to solve.

She thanked him shyly and headed for the door to exit the chamber, and Theseus was struck with worry. Anything could be on the other side of that door! And most things that might be there were quite dangerous!

"Young lady, might I accompany you until we reach your father?" he requested. "You will certainly be safe with me at your side, for I am Theseus, Champion of Elysium, and no shade would dare lay a hand upon anyone in my protection!" And if they tried, his blessed spear would find them long before they reached the child.

She looked at the door, and then back at Theseus. "Okay." She had a little pouch slung over her shoulder, and she tucked the stuffed toy inside before reaching out one chubby hand. "My name's Corinna."

It was difficult to place her accent, but the child was from somewhere on the surface, that much was certain. The denizens originating in the Underworld spoke in a much different way. "Where do you hail from, Corinna?"

She gave him a quite confused look. Ah, well. Worth a try.

The enormous door slid open, Theseus reached to take her hand, and they ventured higher into Elysium.

Thank all the gods this child had Theseus by her side!

For as soon as they entered the next chamber, they were set upon by several Exalted, three wielding spears and one with a sword. Of course, such beings were no match for Theseus, who skewered the lot of them handily, dispatching each ghostly form with another sweep of his spear.

Corinna had stepped back during the battle, but she did not cower nor cry as Theseus would have expected a child to. In fact, she watched with rapt anticipation, as if entertained, and, well. Theseus could not help but be charmed! His fighting style was duly entertaining!

"I must say, you are a brave girl! You were not the least bit frightened by those shades!"

"They weren't scary," she said, trotting after him and this time grasping at his champion's belt the way a young one would normally clutch at their mother's skirts.

He wondered...

"You mentioned we were looking for your father, yes? Is your mother around here as well?" he asked, consciously slowing his usual brisk pace so that she could keep up.

Corinna shook her head. "I don't have one. Just daddy, and papa, and grandmother, and grandfather, and nana, and all my aunts and uncles. Daddy is up here, though."

"You come from a large family!" And a strange one, to boot. Where Theseus was from, it would be unusual for a child to have two fathers and no mother. Not unheard of, he supposed, but odd.

There were two doors leading out of this chamber, and one of them had an indicator that it would lead to Charon's shop, which would be much the safer way to take a child. Judging by the distance Theseus had traveled, this would be the shop nearest to the stadium, where he could recruit Asterius to help him bring her to safety.

Corinna stepped toward the door to the shop before Theseus could, as if she knew she would be safe there. Or, perhaps, she just thought this was the way to find her father. He followed her through, quite proud that she did not even startle at the sound of the massive gates sliding open and shut.

Charon intimidated the best of Elysium's heroes, all for different reasons. Some feared his ghostly appearance, and others told tales of what happened to anyone daft enough to steal from him. Theseus, personally, found the Stygian boatman not particularly terrifying but awfully difficult to talk to. And this was a challenge for a man as personable as Theseus.

Charon made his usual monstrous groaning in greeting, all though it rambled on a bit longer than usual, as if he, too, was startled by the presence of a child in his shop. Corinna waved her free hand at him and growled back. Charon's head tipped to the side as he directed a questioning noise at Theseus.

"I, um. I am escorting the young lady to find her father," Theseus explained.

He never was certain whether Charon could understand his speech, or if it was just as garbled in translation, but Charon seemed satisfied, and gave him a nod.

Onward they went, then.

The usual roar of a crowd was quiet—Theseus' eternal rival, the fiend from the pits of hell, was not on his way and therefore Theseus and Asterius were not preparing for a fight. Corinna wandered toward the gates of the arena, but Theseus kept her from passing through them, indicating his usual side passageway into the bowels of the building surrounding the arena, instead.

"We will be able to get through here faster."

She pouted in the direction of the gates, but then nodded at him and followed him to the side entrance.

Theseus had never really considered whether the stadium was an appropriate place for children. It had never been a concern before he had

one following him inside, and then he realized abruptly that this place was not *at all* appropriate for children. Dear gods, did all of the athletes really need to wander around nude so often? This was Elysium, they could manifest and will away their clothing, there was no need for concern about how long it would take to remove and put back on.

He felt a need to cover Corinna's eyes, but she was focused on the wall mosaic that ran along the hallways of the Elysian stadium, tracing her finger over the shapes of flowers and leaves that were illustrated along the walls. She had taken her stuffed toy out (Theseus could see that it had a face, but still did not know what sort of creature it was supposed to be, although it looked notably familiar) and was pointing its little eyes toward the walls as well.

Yet another warrior strode past with everything on full display, and Theseus groaned, both with irritation and with certainty that he would look exactly the same had he not brought a small companion to attend to.

Thankfully, the room where he and Asterius prepared themselves for battle was private.

Asterius was already inside, Theseus could see the bulk of him through the curtained-off doorway. "Now, little one, I am going to introduce you to a friend of mine," he said. "He is my brother-in-arms, an extremely powerful and brave warrior! And some mortals do find him a fearsome creature, but I trust you will not be frightened, for he is a gentle beast, and—"

She had poked her face through the curtain.

"—and. Hey! I wasn't finished with—"

The shriek that followed was not one of terror (a reaction Theseus remembered from some of their early combatants in the arena) but of delight. The child moved faster than Theseus had yet seen her go, running full-tilt at Asterius, who'd barely had time to react.

"Fluffy!" she exclaimed, hugging his knee. Asterius looked down at her with much surprise.

"What... who is this?" he asked. He was seated on one of the couches as if waiting for Theseus to join him (because he *was* waiting for Theseus to join him, and Theseus was quite late), and Theseus' new little friend was attempting to clamber into his lap.

It was a sweet sight, honestly. The Minotaur likely never knew any mortal children, but he was ever-so-gentle as he picked her up, letting her hug him properly, even though her arms were nowhere near long enough to go all the way 'round. Asterius got that soft look in his eye he sometimes bestowed upon Theseus, the one that made Theseus feel as if he had mortal blood in his veins again for how deeply it made him blush.

Theseus, of course, had children back when he was a mortal, but he had never been particularly close with them, having a kingdom to rule, and all. Perhaps this was another thing he could have in the afterlife with Asterius that he'd ignored during his mortal days. Maybe Corinna's father, whoever he was, would allow her to come back and see him, and they could take her under their proverbial wing, and—

"Theseus, you have noticed you've found a godling, have you not?"

That certainly startled him out of his reverie. "A what? No, she's just... *no*. It can't be!" What kind of godling would she even be? Theseus was not an expert in the Chthonic gods, by any means, but there weren't so many of them one could lose track of one. And none of them were known to appear as children.

"She's floating."

"I... oh." Theseus noted that this was true. Corinna was hovering about a foot in the air above Asterius' lap so that she could pet his nose. "So she is."

She continued to laugh, bright and bubbly.

"Did you even need my help crossing that river?" Theseus was reminded of his initial suspicions, of a different sort of being taking a child's guise.

"No," she answered, through her laughter. "I was playing."

"Trickery!" Theseus howled, and she only laughed louder, nearly drifting away before Asterius caught her in one hand, an anchor for her to hold onto. Her tiny hands barely wrapped around one of his fingers. "You little imp, you've fooled me!" He shouted through a smile, still entirely charmed. Possibly even more so; she was clever even despite her young age.

"It was fun!"

"I don't suppose you'll tell us who you really are, now?"

She continued to bob about in midair, holding onto Asterius' hand. "I'm Corinna."

Before he could properly determine anything else, there was a clatter from the hall and a shout from one of the warriors that occupied it. Theseus turned, only to find the curtain separating their private room from the rest of the stadium being flung open, and the most horrifying creature occupying it. Who let him back here!?

"Fiend! You dare disturb my—"

"Corinna!" said the blackguard, paying Theseus no mind even though it was his chambers the monster invaded.

Despite the presence of such an evil hellspawn, Corinna was still laughing, bobbing over in midair so that the daemon could snatch her up. "What! Are! You! Doing!" Theseus demanded to know.

The fiend, damn him, continued not to address Theseus. "Oh gods, I was so worried about you, love. Charon said you were with Theseus and—"

"Explain yourself, hellspawn, or I will be forced to dispatch you here!" It would be a messy task, Theseus couldn't throw his spear in such tight quarters, but he would defend this child from the monster if need be!

"Explain *myself*?" he asked, incredulity covering his expression. "You explain! What were you doing with my daughter?" *His* daughter? Oh.

Theseus did now see the fire-bright of her feet poking out from beneath the hem of her dress, now that it was mentioned.

"Playing with me!" Corinna explained for him. "I was having fun!"

"You were wandering around the Underworld unsupervised again, is what you were doing." The monster pressed his cheek against hers, which was, admittedly, a bit sweet. Not as adorable as Asterius holding her in one hand, though. "Don't scare me like that again. You know it's not safe for you to leave the House on your own."

"It wasn't scary. He stabbed all the mean guys." She pointed at Theseus' spear, which he still held at the ready. "If I was scared, I would have called papa." She held out her stuffed toy in explanation, and Theseus suddenly realized why it looked familiar. He remembered the fiend calling out to Thanatos mid-battle, and he remembered Death Incarnate materializing and destroying him immediately.

"You mean to say," Theseus spoke slowly, still halfway through the realization himself, "that your other parent is *Death*?"

The daemon had the *gall* to roll his eyes. "Yes, Theseus, and you had better hope Charon didn't tell Than what he told me, or he's going to cut you in half long-ways."

Asterius, who, strangely, had not pulled out his axe the moment they were set upon by the hellspawn, snorted. "I believe it's simply been a misunderstanding," he said. "The King did not realize this child was a godling, let alone your daughter. He thought she was simply a young one in need, and so he brought her here to keep her safe."

"Is this true?" he asked Theseus, giving him his most unnerving stare.

"Yes. I. Well, she said she was looking for her father and I thought somebody here might know him. So I brought her along, and defeated the Exalted who set upon us on our way."

"Well," said the fiend, with all the authority of an upset mother bear, "I suppose I can let this go. On one condition."

"And what is that?" Theseus demanded.

"You," the vile monster pointed at him, "stop calling me a fiend and a hellspawn and whatever else in front of my daughter. We're trying to teach her that calling people names is bad. And you," this time, he indicated Asterius, "stop calling me 'short one'. As you can see, there are much shorter ones than me around here."

Asterius nodded, and Theseus, after a moment of pouting, said, "fine. Somebody ought to have warned me there was a smaller version of you wandering about, though. She's much more pleasant than you are, by the way."

"Obviously, she's the best person in the Underworld." He smiled at Corinna, who was now floating circles around him.

"Somebody did warn you," Asterius said, "you complained about it for months when he did not show up to fight you while he was caring for the child."

Theseus, conveniently, remembered this experience only as a stretch of time in which the monster did not show his face either out of rudeness or cowardice, as a personal slight against Theseus.

The daemon—*Zagreus*—lit up when Asterius mentioned it. "You missed me? How sweet."

"I did not."

"He's a nice man," Corinna said, utterly ruining his reputation before his greatest post-mortem rival.

"Lies and slander!" he shouted, which only made her dissolve into giggles again.

"I like him," she determined. He honestly should not have been so pleased by positive regard from the daemon's spawn. But she was a very cute hellspawn.

Zagreus plucked her out of midair, clutching her close to his chest, his fingers adjusting a part of her braid which had come loose. Theseus wondered if he had been the one to put it there in the first place. "Come now, love. We'll have to get back to the house before Thanatos destroys half the Underworld looking for you." She made a fussy little noise at being drawn away from her new playmate.

"I'll see you again, if your father allows it," Theseus said.

"I'll bring her to one of our matches," Zagreus agreed, "she can watch you lose to me."

Now, that. That was just untrue.

Theseus made to proclaim as much, but Zagreus had already turned and was headed for the door. Corinna peeked over his shoulder, waving one tiny hand at Theseus in an excited gesture of farewell.

Well.

Perhaps Theseus, Champion of Elysium, famed King of Athens, would take up babysitting.

Author's Note:

Corinna is a derivative of Kore, which is Persephone's original name (and was also the placeholder name I used for Corinna before I looked up a name for her.)

I have pictures of her [here!](#)

Visit me on Twitter @luddlestons for more Hades nonsense and for me eventually drawing this child as she appears in this fic bc I've only drawn her older or younger.